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Dec. 12, '75.

Dear Daw Khin Mya,

One of my questions about sati was: who is aware? I asked this on purpose, because we all know in theory: not a self is aware, but awareness is aware. However, we should scrutinize ourselves, check: is there some idea of self who is aware? It is likely to come up so long as we are not sotāpanna yet. However, at the actual moment there is right sati, just at that short moment, there should not be the idea of self who is aware. If that is so, we still haven't understood what is sati. I stress this point, because it is important to find out when there is right awareness, and when there is only thinking about phenomena.

It is so understandable that we desire sati, that we are so pleased when there are a lot of kusala cittas with sati, but, who has kusala cittas with sati? Is there an idea of self who likes so much to have a lot of sati? Is there desire for a lot of sati? This we should find out, because if we do not know this, we go on and on and we think there is the right sati, but it is only thinking about sati, and having desire for sati, and then the right understanding cannot be developed. Right understanding of phenomena is the aim; not: a lot of sati the whole day. All this that I write to you now is very common, we all have it. We all wish for sati, we try to have it, we are pleased with a lot of kusala cittas with sati the whole day, but then, we find out: this is not the right way to develop detachment, that is: detachment from the concept of self. Detachment from the idea of: I have sati, I think, I like, I dislike,

So, we should first know when there is sati, and when there is no sati, but maybe only what we take for sati. People try many different ways to induce sati, but, since the aim is detachment from the concept of self, it means that each little step that is taken ^{now} should also lead to detachment from the self.

What do we take for self: when we do not see realities as they are, we confuse all six doors and realities are not known as they appear, one by one. We put them all together into a mass, a whole and we confuse characteristics of nāma and rūpa with concepts or ideas we are only thinking of. For instance, we think that we hear a bird. Thus, we do not see things as they are, no characteristics of realities are experienced, one at a time. No, a bird cannot be heard. Only sound, just sound, no bird in the sound, can be heard. It is a kind of rūpa which can be experienced through the ears, but naming it rūpa is not the same as just experiencing, knowing that characteristic when it appears. (we should not confuse naming it "rūpa" or "sound" with: just knowing that characteristic when it appears, that is all, nothing else.) Sound should be known as only sound. Then, there is also the experience of sound. ~~Any~~ The sound and the experience of sound arise cannot be object of awareness at the same time, the sati can only be aware of one object at a time. It depends on the sati, not on our choice (then the self would come in and it is no use) of what object there is awareness. It is not self who experiences sound, only a kind of nāma, which experiences sound through the ear-door. No need to name it: nāma. It can be known when it appears: only the experience of sound, hearing, that is all, nothing else. Thinking about a bird is another moment of reality. It does not appear at the same time as sound or hearing. Different realities should not be

confused, put together, then realities would not be known one at a time and we confuse the different realities and also confuse sound and hearing with the thinking of the concept of bird, which is again entirely different. Characteristics of nama and rupa which appear are different. Nama knows, experiences something, rupa does not experience anything. Sound does not know anything, the experience of sound knows, experiences something, it experiences sound. When namas and rupas are experienced one by one, for example sound is known as just sound, no bird in the sound, hearing is known as just hearing, no self in the hearing, these short moments are moments of right sati and they bring about a tiny bit of detachment from the self. In this way we can check. Many people think: Nothing exercises are necessary, but we should check: are realities known in that way, do they bring about detachment from the self, or is it self which tries to induce sati? Wants a lot of sati? If one has right understanding, sati can arise any time; but the right condition for it is listening. Then there is remembrance and in condition, sati. No self condition, sati.